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Cops never listen

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Cops think they know everything. Trust me, I'm a cop, well I am a cop now, but I can't see that lasting much longer. Two different dash cams back my story up, but that video will never see the light of day. They are going to blame me for what happened to Eddie; I just know they are.

Eddie Roth and I were the two least likely guys to be Deputies on the Geauga County Sherriff's Department. I was tall dark and Italian from Murray Hill. Eddie was tall dark and Jewish from Lyndhurst, but we looked like brothers.

The other Deputies called us the Goomba Boys because they are culturally sensitive like that. Eddie and I called the other guys hayseed shit kickers, so it was even, I guess.

Eddie had been an MP in the Marines. He went to Afghanistan three times before they finally let him out. I had gone through the Cleveland Police Academy thinking I would be a Cleveland cop, but not one guy from my class got a job in Cleveland. City Council funded an Academy class, but they never appropriated the funds to hire any of us.

Eddie answered an ad in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, and I got a tip from the Police Union. It was the least they could do, as they had started taking dues out of my Cadet pay. I landed on the force three months after Eddie did, but he was nearly 30 and I was barely 25.

Gauga County Sherriff Red Carpenter hired both of us. Eddie and I hit it off right away. Eddie was a scream off duty and all business on duty. I used him as a role model. I turned out to be a pretty good cop, but Eddie had seven years on me, as far as police work went. It was probably that experience that got him killed.

When Eddie saw the schedule for September, he saw we both worked 11 to 7 on Friday the 12th and that we both had a rare weekend off.

“We don’t work again until Monday morning, Pete,” he had said. “What say we grab our stuff and head out to Pymatuning, pitch our tents, and sleep till noon or so before we start killing fish.”

The 12th of September had arrived. Eddie and I had all our stuff packed into the back of his Chevy pickup at the Sherriff’s Department. We should have been able to get on the road by 8:00 a.m., but the trip never happened.

I was sitting at the stop light at Route 528 and Route 87 just east of Middlefield when I heard Eddie call in a license plate for a car that had run the red light at the Burger King across from Giant Eagle.

The dispatcher sounded breathless when he called back, “It’s hot Eddie, I repeat, you have a stolen vehicle. Do not stop the vehicle until I get you backup.”

Department policy requires two cruisers make a hot car stop. Before the dispatcher could make the call for backup, I radioed in and told the dispatcher where I was. Eddie acknowledged, and turned left towards town and I pulled my cruiser to a stop across both lanes of Route 87.

When I saw the Lumina, I turned my lights on, and Eddie turned his on at the same time. We were about 200 yards apart with a battered, red Chevy Lumina between us. The driver of the Lumina slammed on the brakes and then pulled the car off the road, turned his car off, and dowsed his headlights. I pulled nose-to-nose with the Lumina, and Eddie pulled in behind the stopped car.

I turned on my spot light and shined it into the eyes of the trapped driver. I opened my cruiser door and knelt behind it. I pulled my weapon out of the holster and flicked the safety off. I radioed Eddie that I was in position. Eddie thumbed his PA speaker button.

“Deputy Manelli is in the car in front of you; he has his weapon drawn. I will be walking up to your car with my hand on my weapon. Please place both of your hands on the wheel and leave them there. If you understand me, nod your head vigorously.”

The driver already had both hands on the wheel. His head started bobbing up and down. I radioed Eddie that the driver was complying.

Eddie slipped out of his cruiser and put his campaign hat on top of his head. He left his door open in case he needed cover. He unsnapped the safety strap on his weapon, flicked his safety off, and placed his hand on the gun butt. Eddie slid out about five feet from the bumper of the Lumina and started angling to the driver’s door.

When Eddie signaled me, I holstered my weapon. I did leave my hand on the butt as I walked over to take a position at the driver side front fender of the Lumina.

“Sir,” Eddie addressed the driver. “I am going to open your door. Leave your hands on the wheel until I tell you to exit the vehicle.”

Eddie opened the driver door and leaned forward to grasp the driver’s elbow, “Please step out of the car, then face the car, put your hands on the roof of the car, and freeze.”

When the driver cleared the door, I moved to close it. You wouldn’t want a suspect to panic and dive back in for a weapon hidden under the seat.

I watched and Eddie patted the driver down. I didn’t take long. The driver was a little man with shoulder length white hair and a flowing white beard. His nose was sharp and stuck out of his moustache like a bird’s beak. His darting, dark eyes stared into the night on the other side of the Lumina. His hands were shaking on the roof of the car; the sleeve buttons on his black suit coat tapped a nervous rhythm.

“Deputy Manelli,” Eddie said. “Do you know what this gentleman is wearing on his head?”

I looked and saw a round black beanie about six inches across affixed to the hair at the crown of the man’s head with three Bobbie pins. I had no idea what it was. For all I knew it was for covering a bald spot.

“I have no idea, Deputy Roth,” I said. When I said, “Roth,” the little old man focused on Eddie’s face and a brief smile showed under the white whiskers.

Eddie had removed the wallet from the driver’s inside jacket pocket and was reading the license visible through a plastic window.

“It’s a Yamika,” Eddie said smiling. “This is Mr. Leopold Szpiegel. He is a Rabbi.”

“I know what a Rabbi is, but what’s a Yamika,” I said.

Eddie smiled his biggest smile and said, “It is a traditional head covering worn by Jews. Correct me if I’m wrong, Rabbi, but the Talmud says cover the child’s head so that he will have the fear of heaven. Turn around, Rabbi.”

Mr. Szpiegel turned to Eddie and laughed, “Your mother would be proud to know you paid good attention in Hebrew School.”

Eddie handed the Rabbi his wallet. “What are you doing out in the heart of Amish country in a stolen car, sir?”

The Rabbi looked down at his shoes like a child being caught trying to steal a cookie.

“I am sorry, Deputy Roth,” the Rabbi mumbled. “I would never have taken this car if it weren’t a matter of life and death. I assure you that if you allow me to continue on my way, that I will present myself at your headquarters tomorrow to face the music for stealing this car.”

“Rabbi Szpiegel,” Eddie said. “Even if you had the perfect excuse for taking this car, I couldn’t let you go. Deputy Manelli and I have called this in by radio. Right now, the fact that we have located this stolen car has been communicated to the police department where the complaint was filed. Do you understand?”

“Yes, yes, of course, but if I could tell you my story, you might acquiesce and allow me to dispose of the problem in the trunk of this car before you arrest me,” Rabbi Szpiegel said. “I am afraid I have made a horrible mistake, but I should be the only one to pay for it.”

“What mistake did you make,” I asked.

The old man glanced at the rear of the Lumina. Eddie saw it too.

“What’s in the trunk, Rabbi Szpiegel,” Eddie asked.

Rabbi Szpiegel’s eyes were wide with fear when he uttered one word, “Golem.”

Eddie threw back his head and laughed so hard he nearly lost his campaign hat. I was about as confused as I have ever been right then. The Rabbi looked like he had seen a ghost and Eddie was laughing so hard he could barely catch his breath.

Talk about mixed signals.

“Do you have Santa and the Easter Bunny in there, as well? Perhaps the Boogie Man and the Loch Ness monster too,” Eddie asked as he got his breathing under control and wiped tears out of his eyes.

“What the fuck,” I said.

Eddie looked at me with a huge grin on his face, “A Golem,” he said with a wink, “is an evil creature formed from clay or dirt into the shape of a man. My Zeidy, excuse me, my grandfather, used to scare the crap out of us with Golem stories. It’s the Jewish Boogie Man.”

“What the fuck,” I repeated.

“Please, Officer Roth,” the Rabbi pleaded. “This is serious. I have a Golem in the trunk of this car and I need to deliver it to the man that forced me to create it or he will hurt my Sadie.”

“Who is Sadie, your wife,” Eddie asked.

“My cat,” said Rabbi Szpiegel. “He took my cat Sadie and he will hurt her if I don’t give him this Golem.”

“Who took your cat,” Eddie asked.

“What the fuck,” I said again.

“Rabbi Cohen in Youngstown,” our Rabbi said. “He took Sadie when he visited me last week. He sent a picture in the email.”

“Oh,” Eddie said in a very calm voice. “I’ve got it now. Rabbi Cohen visited you from Youngstown. He kidnapped your cat, Sadie, and promised not to hurt her if you would just make him a Golem and deliver it. You didn’t know how you were going to get the Golem to the other Rabbi until you decided to steal a car. Is that about right?”

“Exactly,” said Rabbi Szpiegel missing the twinkle of mischief in Eddie’s eyes. “I have studied Kabbalistic lore for nearly my whole life. I made the mistake of telling Rabbi Cohen that I thought I could even make a Golem if I had to. I was bragging; oh, dear, pride goeth before the fall, I’m afraid.”

“Deputy Manelli,” Eddie said in the same calm voice. “Would you get Rabbi Cohen’s contact information from Rabbi Szpiegel while I call this in?”

As Rabbi Szpiegel turned to me in horror, Eddie made the twirling finger sign for crazy and went to call our situation in.

“You can’t contact Rabbi Cohen,” he said. “He’ll hurt my Sadie. Please don’t...”

“We will use the information to go and save Sadie,” I said. “We would never tip him off beforehand.”

Rabbi Szpiegel visibly calmed down and gave me a phone number and an address for Rabbi Cohen.

“Deputy Roth,” I said over the old man’s head as Eddie walked back to the Lumina. “What did the dispatcher tell you?”

“We are to hold Rabbi Szpiegel here until Deputy Windsor arrives,” Eddie said. “He will transport the Rabbi to where he needs to be.”

Deputy Windsor meant that another Deputy would come to take Rabbi Szpiegel in for a psych evaluation at the Chardon Mental Health Center. There used to be a mental hospital called Windsor in Chagrin Falls. The hospital is gone but Deputy Windsor stuck.

“Ok by me,” I said. “I’ll help Rabbi Szpiegel to a seat in the back of my cruiser. Right this way, and shut him inside. He looked so forlorn. I felt sorry for the crazy old guy.”

“Hey Deputy Manelli,” Eddie said as he broke into an evil grin. “Do you want to see what a Golem looks like?”

“Sure,” I said. “I always wanted to see an evil clay man.”

Eddie reached inside the Lumina and pushed the trunk release button. I heard the clunk and the trunk opened a couple of inches.

“Something’s in that trunk,” Eddie whispered to me. “Did you see how low it is sitting on the springs?”

“Yes, I did,” I said. “It better not be dope or a dead body. We’ll never get to the lake.”

We didn’t.

We both stepped behind the Lumina and Eddie flipped the trunk open. A statute of a man carved out of what looked like terra cotta was curled in the fetal position in the trunk of the Lumina.

“Holy shit,” Eddie said. “This Rabbi is talented and crazy. That thing looks like it could sit up and talk to us.”

“Do you think he made it,” I said. “I bet he saw it at some art gallery and decided he had found a Golem. How in the hell did stories of a statue scare the crap out of you, anyway?”

“A Golem isn’t just a statue,” Eddie said. “My grandfather said you could animate a Golem to do your bidding by writing the true name of god on a piece of paper and putting it into the ear of a Golem.”

“Your grandfather knew the true name of God,” I said. “I suppose they were on a first name basis.”

“Naw, only Jewish mystics and Rabbis that studied Kabbalah know the real name of God,” Eddie said.

“Kabbalah, what the hell is Kabbalah,” I said.

Eddie never answered me.

“What’s this,” Eddie said reaching into the trunk to grab a small roll of what looked like parchment. He unrolled the paper and broke into a grin.

“What,” I said.

“It looks suitably mystical to me,” Eddie said. “I bet it’s the true name of God.”

With that, Eddie rolled up the paper and slid it into a small hole in the exposed ear of the statue.

On the dash cam tape from my cruiser, you see me apparently leap into the air backwards and sail over Eddie’s cruiser. You can hear the Rabbi in my back seat screaming his brains out.

From Eddie’s dash cam, you see me disappear up over the cruiser and you see the terra cotta arm that threw me like a rag doll grab Eddie by the throat. Eddie had turned to see me go flying over his cruiser, so you see the look of confusion and then shock on his face as the Golem’s fingers close on his windpipe.

Eddie gurgled once and got his hand to the butt of his weapon before you hear a great snap and you see Eddie go limp. The Golem didn’t let go of Eddie’s body until he had climbed out of the trunk. I only know this because I’ve seen the dash cam tapes. I was out cold behind Eddie’s cruiser until I heard the glass shatter.

From my dash cam, you see the Golem come out from behind the Lumina and dropping Eddie like a bag of corn. Eddie’s forehead cracks the pavement, but he never felt it.

The Golem seems to notice the Rabbi screaming himself hoarse in my cruiser and marches straight for him.

Eddie’s footage shows the Golem bashing at the rear door of my cruiser once, twice, and bouncing it open on the third smash. That’s when the glass shattered. That’s when I came to.

I stagger out from behind Eddie’s cruiser and steady myself on the driver-side front fender. I shake my head once and then twice. You can see that I am bleeding from a cut just below my right eye. It’s where my face kissed the road.

Just then the Golem drags a very limp Rabbi out of my cruiser. I pull my weapon and order the Golem to put the Rabbi down. The Golem ignores me and begins shaking the Rabbi violently.

You hear me warn the Golem one more time, and then I fire two rounds. Both rounds hit the Golem in the back where they kick up orange clouds of dust, but the Golem keeps shaking the Rabbi. By this time, it is obvious that the Rabbi is as dead as Eddie.

I open fire again and empty my piece. All of the shots hit the Golem, but the last shot goes wide and strikes the Golem in the left side of his head. That's when you see the Golem stiffen and fall over onto the road. He shatters into a dozen pieces.

My last shot blew the roll of parchment out of the Golem's ear.

Eddie's dash cam shows me walking to Eddie and checking his pulse before I reload. I walk over to the Rabbi, but I don't check his pulse because his head has worked itself backward on his shoulders.

I walk into the pile of terra cotta pieces and reach down. I pick up a small roll of parchment. I reach into a pocket on my Sam Houston belt and pull out a Bic lighter.

They are trying to say I destroyed evidence, but, since they have no idea what was on that piece of paper, they can't make that charge stick. I just bet my ass that they try to pin Eddie and Rabbi Szpiegel on me.

I saw that dash cam footage about thirty minutes ago in Sherriff Red's office. He was there and his Chief Deputy was there, and neither of them said a word. They just stared at the monitor and wouldn't look at me. Sherriff Red told me to go sit in the day room and not say a word to a soul.

That's what I did.

The next day, they got around to checking up on Rabbi Cohen. Sadie was there, and the ransom email was on his computer. I hope that's enough to just let me retire and go away.